



CITY OF HOUSTON

PRESS RELEASE

Office of Council Member Robert Gallegos, District I

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CITY APPROVES PLANS TO CREATE BOTANIC GARDEN, RESTORE HISTORIC GOLF COURSE

Two city-owned green spaces could soon be revitalized with millions of dollars in privately funded improvements. On Wednesday, Houston City Council approved long-term lease agreements with the Houston Golf Association (HGA) to renovate and operate Gus Wortham as a golf course, and with the Houston Botanic Garden Board (HBG) to redevelop the Glenbrook Golf Course site as a botanic garden.

"It's a great day for the community I represent and for the city of Houston," said Council Member Robert Gallegos, whose District I includes both sites. "It's not often that two well-respected non-profit organizations approach you with plans to revitalize two green spaces using private dollars."

Gus Wortham Golf Course is the oldest 18-hole golf course in the state of Texas and former home of the Houston Country Club. It has hosted a number of golf tournaments and prominent golfers over its 107-year history. The site was purchased in 1972 by the city of Houston and renamed Gus Wortham.

Gus Wortham and Glenbrook golf courses have been in need of renovations and upgrades in order to make them profitable and create cash flow to reinvest into the facilities. Both have lacked revenue generators like food and beverage concessions and adequate driving ranges.

"As a result, the city has been unable to invest in Gus Wortham and make it appealing for area golfers," Gallegos said. "I'm confident that with HGA's investment and expertise in the industry, we will be able to restore this East End crown jewel to its former glory."

Glenbrook Golf Course, located approximately 3 miles southeast of Gus Wortham, opened its doors to the public in 1960. The city-owned golf course is under private management through the end of this year. "The proposal to convert this site from an underperforming golf course to a world-class botanic garden is exciting and will spur additional economic development," Gallegos said, and noted a Greater Houston Partnership study that showed a botanic garden would pump \$20-25 million per year to the Houston economy.

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But before either organization breaks ground they will have to develop conceptual plans and meet fundraising benchmarks. The HGA will need to raise at least \$5 million by December 31 of this year and HBG will need to have at least \$20 million in its coffers by the end of 2017. This will ensure both organizations have adequate capital and fundraising sources before disturbing the properties. In total, HGA and HBG are expected to invest over 50 million in private dollars to improve the sites. Both organizations have developed fundraising plans and are confident they can meet the fundraising benchmarks outlined in their contract.

“Both projects will be tremendous assets for District I and great additions to our city’s many cultural offerings,” Gallegos said. “Having worked hard on these two projects over the last year, I am excited to be near the point of creating a world class Houston Botanic Garden and renovating historic Gus Wortham Golf Course.”

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